

(brief comments between them & of crew)

PEER BODE: Ok, this is April 1st, 1998. And we're here at Jessie Shefrin's place, to do an interview with Steina Vasulka. And this is actually a tape that we're looking forward to having as part of the Upstate Video History Project, and as the video oral history interviews. So as I'm... Let's see, Steina was here three years ago, and we made a wonderful recording and interview at that time, (Vasulka: You did?) which was very... Yeah, did you never see it?

STEINA VASULKA: No.

BODE: You should get a copy.

VASULKA: Yes.

BODE: Yeah. (they laugh) And it was a kind of freeform... We had a lot of questions, and it was a great interview. And so...

VASULKA: I'm gonna repeat everything, (inaudible)

BODE: ...so as not to repeat that—exactly, right?—we'll see if in fact it's all down that way. And so we may cover, actually, some of the same ground with these questions, although I think there're some areas that will be actually quite different than what we had talked about. I guess actually, in the way of a first question, which is an issue of understanding something about chronology—and you were just commenting on how I was pushing the dates back and was saying late sixties, when it was in fact early seventies, and... (Vasulka: Yeah) So there's some real importance of trying to establish when— dates when things actually happened. So maybe you could talk some about this area between 1968 and the early eighties.

VASULKA: I don't know much about... '68 or '70, I don't know much about it, because I wasn't in video. I mean, I started in '69. My video history starts from the time I saw that show in New York on Fifty-Seventh Street, Howard Wise Gallery, called Television as a Creative Medium. I was just audience. But that was a very important show. You know?

BODE: Who was in that show? That was...?

VASULKA: Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette had the *Wipe Cycle*; that was right when you came in. See, the elevator door opened and you stepped into a corridor. This matrix or montage(?) was at the end. And you look at it and say, "What's going on there?" And you see the elevator door open and then you step out. So it was a wipe cycle. I mean, it had this delay, which they did through having the feed reel on one VCR and the takeup

VASULKA (Cont.): reel on another VCR. And one of them recorded and the other one played back. But this idea of delayed time... I mean, nobody had experienced it. Very few people had. So it was astounding. Because we know already how to come closer to television; that we knew, that it was possible to have, you know, to be able to see on the screen exactly what you were doing in front of the camera; but to see it on a delay was just mind blowing.

BODE: Mm-hm. Paul Ryan, I think, was in that show also.

VASULKA: Paul Ryan was in it. Nam June, of course; he had *Eat TV Jello(?)*. Eric Siegel had a colorizer tape called *Einstein*. And Juan Downey, Ted(?) (inaudible). But to me, the Siegel was the most important. Not as much when I saw it as in that respect, because this was black and white signal coming out in flaming colors. And that philosophy, that he could take something black and white and make it into color was absolutely (inaudible).

BODE: Mm-hm. And you said— what was that? That was 1971?

VASULKA: That was '69.

BODE: That was '69.

VASULKA: That was '69.

BODE: Ok.

VASULKA: In the summer. I would guess August, but I'm not sure.

BODE: Mm-hm. And you said you were a participant, in the sense of being a viewer.

You weren't (inaudible)

VASULKA: Yeah. I just was an audience.

BODE: So what was the next stage, then, where...?

VASULKA: Well, for me, it was that Woody had started working in video. And I was paying very little attention to it; I was being a musician, and he was doing that. Instead of film, he liked to...

BODE: He was doing that in '69, already at that time?

VASULKA: Yeah, '69. Sort of... That's when a lot of people were starting. Equipment was available. I don't know, you have to ask Woody how he found out about it, because he knew about it, I think, before he saw the Television as a Creative Medium show. But

VASULKA (Cont.): he suggested... He was working for somebody that wanted to do an industrial exhibit. He suggested to them that they did it in video instead of film, because of the multiple screens and all those things. This is when the multiple screens were happening in video— in film. So...

BODE: I think Expanded Cinema notions(?).

VASULKA: Yeah, this Expanded Cinema notions(?), right. So I was there, and I started, you know, looking at feedbacks and hanging around. It was in our studio.

BODE: And so what kind of studio was it that...?

VASULKA: It was a photographer's studio. (Bode: Uh-huh) And he just had all this equipment. And Woody caught on, and one other guy caught on. But see, this kind of a thing, when you just fall in love with a medium and you know this is it. But so did I, actually. Unfortunately, this— our competition for the equipment, he died in a motorcycle accident shortly thereafter. So then it was just us. And we just started carrying the equipment home, piece by piece. We just lived around the corner. So the PortaPak ended up in our loft. And then the disc— I mean, the player ended up in our loft. And then the recorded ended up. And then we eventually had everything home. And that was the beginning.

BODE: So you had— and that was the beginning, meaning that you then had equipment in your studio, and (Vasulka: Yeah) this studio experience that you had— 'cause that seems so key to what you both do, actually.

VASULKA: Yeah. To have it home. (Bode: Mm-hm) And the people there couldn't care less. Nobody even missed the equipment not being there, because nobody was using it.

BODE: Oh. Mm-hm.

VASULKA: So we were lucky.

MAN: And this was in New York?

VASULKA: That was... Yeah. We were on Fourteenth Street, the studio was in the lower part of Manhattan. I think Sixth(?) Avenue. But anyhow, so then, you know, first... Yeah. And then Woody started— Woody actually went out already in '69 with the PortaPak. I think the first time he went was to Fillmore East, when he did Jethro Tull, but I'm not sure. I think that was the first. And I saw the Jethro Tull tape, and I said, "This is for me," you know? And then we started just going out regularly with the PortaPak, taping cultural events in the city, you know, things like that(?). But always the electronic (inaudible)

BODE: And sneaking it into the Fillmore.

VASULKA: No, not really.

BODE: You just...?

VASULKA: No, no. There was a photographer who had a press pass, and he took Woody with him. And Woody just went straight up to the sound people and asked them for a feed. And they said, "What for?" (laughter) He said, "Because I'm taping it." "Oh, sure." It was just like that.

BODE: Wow.

VASULKA: And for some reason, the CD(?), (inaudible) CD(?), had the line in(?) and then the AV(?) came out and did not have a line in, only mic in. So those early sound recordings are great.

BODE: Wow.

VASULKA: Yeah. It was amazing. Nobody knew the word, video. "What you do?" "Video." "What's that?" "It's like audio, but images." "What's that?" "It's TV." "Oh." (they laugh) It was kind of a stunted dialogue.

BODE: Mm-hm. So what were your first tapes like that you were making, your first recordings?

VASULKA: Well, we did the feedback, which is sort of like just pointing a camera (inaudible) on a tripod, so that sort of passing(?), in a way. But then we immediately took them over to a Bookla(?) synthesizer, had the video into it, and to get, you know, like a voltage control. So we were immediately keen on that whole thing, that this was the way we were gonna go. But my first recording I remember was with Alfons Schilling(?), if you remember him.

BODE: I do remember him, yeah.

VASULKA: And...

BODE: Swiss painter.

VASULKA: Yeah, photographer, three-D guy.

BODE: Three-D photographer, three-D guy.

VASULKA: And I remember, we sat in our loft and we got a little grass together there, and got a little high, and I started swinging the camera around and doing this kind of—like a quick (inaudible) people. And we looked back at it, and they were roaring with laughter, they thought it was so funny. And they were, of course, laughing—now I realize—because they were so high on grass; but you know, for me, it was the encouragement. I knew I was there. I had arrived. And I think it was 1st of January in 1970. That's at least my fictional date, first day of a new decade. Steina arrived. She's now a video art. No violin anymore. (Bode: Laughs) Finished. And that's true. I mean, I packed the violin up and... Finished. Didn't touch it for years and years.

BODE: Hm. And then the tapes that you made, did... Well, you made a lot of tapes. And then there was the iss—... Did you feel compelled to show them? Like, in terms of thinking about screenings and... There were places in New York, like the Anthology Film Archives and... Or maybe—I don't know if they were up, if they had started yet. The Millennium, I think, was there, right?

VASULKA: See, this is what was interesting. We asked, actually, all of them, because we used it as a pretext to meet everybody. So we trudged over to Global Village and said, "Hey, we are here. Can we have a show?" And the same with Raindance and People's Video (inaudible). But both Raindance and People's Video Theater said, "Absolutely not." We couldn't show, because we were not on the inside, because they had an agenda, they had this special thing, and we wouldn't fit into it, and... You know. Very sort of...

VASULKA (Cont.): But we became friends, so that's not a problem. But we understood that we couldn't possibly intrude. But Global Village said, "Yes, fine," and we had a show there.

BODE: And so that was the documentary... Were they documentary at that time?

VASULKA: They were always documentary. But they did a very interesting thing there. They had this already, I think, in '69. They made a large matrix of monitors. And you know, you couldn't edit tape; it was not yet (inaudible), you couldn't edit. You could cut it with a razor blade. You could try to cut it, but each edit took, like, one minute to settle. So, (laughs) you know, it was that kind of thing. So they did live. They would set up a few playbacks, and they would start this tape— when they know that the segment (inaudible) was coming to an end, they started another tape, and switched between them. And now you had something else go. That's how they ran their shows. And that was quite innovative. It was interesting. You know, that was their(?) theater(?). So they had all... There was also Global Groove. You don't know their(?)...?

BODE: No. I thought it was...

VASULKA: No, they were called(?) Groove Tube.

BODE: Groove Tube, Mm-hm.

VASULKA: Groove Tube. And Channel One. I never knew if there was a difference or it was just two names for the same thing. And these are two guys, you can read about them in many things. One has a kind of a New York Jewish name; the other one's name was Chevy Chase. And it took me years and years to figure out that that Chevy Chase, who was clowning on camera in this Groove Tube, was the Chevy Chase of the *Saturday Night Live*. But there has been an interview with Chevy that you should try to find—I read it somewhere—where he mentions the name of this other... You see, it's a typical name, like David Rothstein, some kind of a name like that, that I just can't remember at the moment. And he talks about reel-to-reel and CV, and I mean, he's really versed. I mean, he was there, carrying PortaPaks, everything. But...

BODE: What was the other groups? You said Rainforest and...

VASULKA: Raindance.

BODE: Raindance. And there was another group that you mentioned.

VASULKA: People's Video Theater.

BODE: People's Video Theater.

VASULKA: Yeah. And they are gonna be a part of this history project. I mean, I'm sure we are gonna interview them all, because they were very important in the...

BODE: So you showed at Global (inaudible)

VASULKA: Yeah, the first show we ever had was in Max's Kansas City steakhouse. And this was a nice place. It was on Eighteenth Street and Fourth Avenue. And, like, the whole Andy Warhol crowd would go there, a lot of underground people. The name was Mickey Ruskin. And he evidently overdosed, like, ten years later, on heroin. And I realize in retrospect, he probably was already a junkie then, because he was kind of a sleepy and dreamy... But he was a successful businessman, to run this restaurant. And he ran it very unorthodoxly, because we could sign the check, and we would get a bill at the end of the month. A very clever thing, because you know, I remember when the bill came, I could always somehow pay it; but it was great to be able to go any time of day, especially late night, into Max's Kansas City steakhouse and get a good dinner, and not have to worry about paying it, you know? And see, Andy did this too. Andy actually had a table there. And all his (inaudible) tight(?) friends were running around. And he paid the bill. And one month the bill came, and it was ten-thousand dollars. (laughs) And that's when he stopped. But that was Andy, that wasn't Mickey. Mickey was willing to run this kind of thing.

VASULKA (Cont.): So I remember I came to him and I said... He had a few (inaudible), because he had... See, he supported the arts. He had actually done a show with Les Levine and... Who was the guy who crushes the cars?

WOMAN: Don Chamberlain?

VASULKA: Yeah. Don Chamberlain was doing something in video. So he had left over five (inaudible), and we talked him into selling three of them to us for a hundred bucks apiece. So actually, the first video equipment we owned were three monitors. And we were always doing this thing this way, you know? Because there was... And the first equipment at all that we bought was an audio synthesizer, (inaudible). So that was our entry into the video, was to buy a puttin(?) and three black and white monitors. Sort of a funny way to do it. But then everything else, we begged, borrowed and stole. And so back to Max's Kansas City.

So Mickey says, "Sure, you can have a show. You can have it upstairs. I'll kick in my two monitors." So we had five monitors. And I said, "So how do we arrange this financially?" (inaudible) "Why don't you do it fifty-fifty?" What did he say? Did he say that? Yeah, something like that. "We will do it fifty-fifty. Or," he said, "You can also take everything (inaudible)." I said, "No, we don't do that; we'll do it fifty-fifty." And then we had three nights there of programming. This is 1970, just— you know, nine or ten months after we started, and we already had stuff for three nights, you know. And one

VASULKA (Cont.): of them was (inaudible) night. We took stuff that we had shot, with all this character action with the Andy Warhol stars. And they didn't only come, they brought all their friends with them, and half of New York. So it was overstuffed up there. And I remember I came to miss Mickey, because we... Yeah— oh, that was the agreement: "If you show it for free, I don't ask you any money. If you show it for money, I want half." So we said, "We'll show for money." And so I came with half of the money for him. And he said, "All of this? Keep it." Because he made so much on the bar those three nights. (they laugh) But this is a typical example of the generosity that there was in the whole, you know, era. It was just there, you know? People weren't thinking money. They were thinking events and, you know... So that's where we showed first.

And there was a man in the audience, a friend of ours, by the name of Andy Mennick(sp?). And he saw the show and he saw the audience, he saw everything. And he had, for a long time, dreamt about a theater, that he wanted to have some kind of alternate theater. And he somehow got it into his head that we were his ticket to the theater. So he tells us to come and see him, that he's gonna show us a place in SoHo. And he takes us into this completely run down, horrible place, that used to be a hotel. Used to be fancy, used to have bar mitzvahs and stuff like that. And we climb up on the second floor, and he opens the door into this space, and we knew, we just knew we had it. It was an old kitchen from the bar mitzvah days, full of refrigerators—wooden—and sinks, and pipes on the floor. And we rented a dumpster outside the window, and just dumped it all out there, big iceboxes and everything. Now I would have kept one, because they were...

VASULKA (Cont.): And so I said to Woody, "So what are we gonna call this place?"

This place? This is the Kitchen." (they laugh)

BODE: Oh. I wondered how that worked.

VASULKA: So that happened. And at the same time we were fixing it up, they were fixing the other places up. I remember that before they fixed up our floor, there was already one theater downstairs one working. They were running one floor with the Cook's Nest(?). And on our floor up there, there were still a lot of rats jumping around, and it was, like, a kind of a semi-scary place, you know? You could fall anywhere through to the ground floor. They held a pow-wow there. They found some Indian tribe somewhere. And there was a guy who ran (inaudible) video program by the name of Sy Griffin(sp?). You don't remember him, do you?

BODE: I've know the name.

VASULKA: Sy Griffin?

BODE: I don't know him.

VASULKA: He was one hell of a hippie, you know? He was just red-headed and absolutely out of his mind. But he decided that this was the place they were gonna have the pow-wow. So they lit, of course, a big fire (laughs) in the middle of it, and sang all night. (laughs) But this is before we opened. (they laugh) Everything went well. And eventually, there were six theaters there, of all sizes, and a big bar. And the bar was the saving grace of the place, especially for us, because sometimes the performances were so lame that people just couldn't stand it. So they wouldn't leave to go home, (Bode: They'd just go drink) they left to go to the bar. (Bode: Right) It was Takka Iimura— you know Takka Iimura?

BODE: Yeah, sure.

VASULKA: He gave one of those deadly performances that just go on forever and nothing changes. And everybody came, because everybody loves Takka. "Oh, Takka's gonna have a show!" And so one by one, everybody left.

BODE: It's like watching someone play chess or something, right?

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah.

BODE: In slow motion.

VASULKA: In slow motion.

BODE: Yeah.

VASULKA: So in the end, we all left; he was alone in the room. But we were all in the bar. Finally, Takka comes out into the bar, and we gave him a standing ovation. (they laugh) But again, we just— we jumped on the place, and we said, “We want it. And we’ll fix it.” And we never thought about the money. And then an envelope comes and says, “Well, how about the money?” By that time, we had applied for money to the New York State Council, and gotten it. So we said— we got eight-thousand dollars. So we said to him, “How’s eight-thousand dollars?” “Perfect. Perfect rent.” So there it went. And so we had the place, then, worry-free for a year. We could do anything we wanted to; rent was paid for.

BODE: And was this the whole eight studios, or eight spaces?

VASULKA: No, this was just the Kitchen.

BODE: The Kitchen, which was one (Vasulka: Yeah) space within this whole building of other theaters (Vasulka: Yeah) and other... And was that the Mercer Arts Center?

VASULKA: That was the Mercer Arts Center. See, you see it as the Mercer Arts Center; we saw it as this hole in the ground when we first came there. And sure enough, it ended with... There was a bar on the other side, on the Broadway side, called Atrium Spa(?). You don't remember it, yeah?

BODE: No, I was too young for bars then.

VASULKA: Adrian's(?). That's where—it was also a hangout. And it was crowded there, and the owners really wanted more space. Greed, greed, greed. So they kept taking out the supports—like this kind of a thing.

BODE: Oh. No kidding. Really?

VASULKA: Yeah, so it could fit on our table in there(?).

BODE: Incredible.

VASULKA: And one day, the building collapsed. It imploded. (they laugh) And it just came down.

MAN: All because they pulled these out?

VASULKA: Yeah.

BODE: Yeah, that's not a good idea.

VASULKA: No, it's not a good idea. Fortunately, it made a few cracks and movements before it came tumbling down, so most people... There was only one guy who died in it. But that's how that place ended, see? (Bode: Mm-hm, I had heard that) The physical space.

BODE: Right, mm-hm. And so— and when was this, then? This would be, in terms of chronology...

VASULKA: We opened— we must've been working it already, like, in February. Let's see the chronology. I think the Max's Kansas City show was somewhere like November, and...

BODE: Of which year?

VASULKA: Of 1970. And by very early spring, '70, we had the Kitchen, and we opened it the middle of June.

MAN: June of '71?

VASULKA: Of '70. No, I mean, it just took a couple of months to fix it up, throw out the iceboxes and so forth. And...

MAN: But you said...

VASULKA: '71, '71. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

MAN: Yeah, fall and then spring, so...

VASULKA: Don't ask me about numbers.

BODE: Yeah. No, it's hard to remember those, yeah.

VASULKA: So— and... There was a big party, and nobody understood what it was, and we said, "This is the opening. This is your place. Everybody can come and do everything." And Shirley didn't understand what was going on.

MAN: Who was Shirley?

VASULKA: Clark(sp?).

MAN: Clark.

BODE: Filmmaker, documentary filmmaker...

VASULKA: No, she was...

MAN: ...personal(?) filmmaker.

VASULKA: Yeah. But she was at that time doing video.

MAN: Oh, she was.

VASULKA: And she says, "Is this for real?," she said. And then she said, "Can I suggest something?" I said yeah. "Why don't you make an open night once a week, that anybody can come and show anything?" And we absolutely took her up on it. So Wednesdays, the whole time we ran the Kitchen, Wednesdays was open night, for people to come and just... Yeah, it became this kind of a— it became a kind of a notorious deadline, because everybody always had to finish their tape before eight o'clock on Wednesdays, you know? And they would come running down with the tapes sort of in their hand, shaking, you know—not having even looked at it yet, you know? It was... And there is an incredible charge in new work—how ever bad it may turn out later. But to see work for the first time, it just has a magic. So it was always a very interesting night. And when nobody showed up, then we would show our stuff. We would always have a backup, you

VASULKA (Cont.): know, because we were also churning out tapes, like, every week.

So if there was a slack, we just took it up.

BODE: And again, there was an audience there that would come to see it?

VASULKA: Oh, yes. Nam June would come a lot, and he would sort... Because he lived very close. See, he lives on Mercer Street, and this was on Mercer Street, just a hundred numbers up. And he would come, you see, in sort of his shoes, this— whatever they are, kind of slippers. Like, he comes like, you know, he had just woken up. And with this big thing around his belly, and the hair unkempt. And he would just come and sit down.

Somebody would put up a tape, and he would immediately go asleep. And then he would wake up just before the end of the tape, and walk up to this young budding video art and say, “Young man, you have genius.” I just thought... (laugh) You know? You haven’t even seen anything! (they laugh)

BODE: What would happen the other nights, that weren’t the Wednesday night open night?

VASULKA: Well, we got ourselves a music curator. It was the first guy on the staff. And when we met him, he was sixteen years old. He was our liaison to the Bookla synthesizer. He was a student of Mortz Bodnik’s(sp?). And he was this young, shy guy, (inaudible) or something, and a very talented person. His name was Rhys Chatham,. So

VASULKA (Cont.): he was seventeen years old when he became the curator, the first (Bode: Oh, I didn't know that) audio curator of the Kitchen. So you're talking about (inaudible) curators, David Rossner(?)... And he was so shy. And we kept saying, "Rhys, you have to bring in some people here." And he said, "Me? How can I do that?" And we said, "Rhys, you know, you have played all your music. This is third Monday, and it's just you and lowly speaker(?). You have to do something more than that." And he said... "Call Lamont," we said. "Just call Lamont Young." "Call Lamont Young." And the reason we wanted Lamont was that we had seen his *Standing Waves* (inaudible). It was in a big auditorium in NYU. I think it was NYU. I don't remember the auditorium, I just remember we went in there. And there were people lying on the floor, sitting on the floor cross-legged, they were in the windows, everywhere. And it was so thick with grass smoke, you know, that you could cut it. You know, you just got high on walking into that room. And everybody was... (makes sucking noise) And they sat, you know, and they were rowing back and forth. And we would walk in between. And every time, like, you changed your head, (Bode: You could hear it change) the sound changed, because they were standing waves. And I think the concert was for five hours; we lasted maybe only three. And I think it's interesting that I walked out of one of the most significant events of my life, that I walked out. Because enough was enough. I had— it was— this was it. It was the moment to leave. And it taught me a lot about time, because it was a non-starting, non-ending event. I think he started the oscillators long before people could enter the room, you know? So it had no beginning, no end. (Bode: Mm-hm, mm-hm) So we asked Rhys to get this guy. And he was at that time, quite famous. I mean, he had the DIA

VASULKA (Cont.): grant, and he was a star. So he didn't think he should do something for free. And he said to Reese, in order to get out of it(?), to formulate it(?), he said, "I will make it as a preview of my new LP." So the posters went out and everything went out, that he was gonna have... And Marion Sazela(sp?) showed her slides, and he previewed his LP. And we absolutely packed the house, completely. And after that, every musician in Manhattan knew that this place was there. And after— it just kicked off. First, every Monday, and then Mondays and Tuesdays. And we didn't know. We thought that there were a lot of other concert programs(?) all over New York. After all, we had (inaudible) But— and we didn't realize they had all died, and that we were the only place. So instead of being arrogant, as we should have been, we were so grateful; we said, "So lucky we are that these people want to use the Kitchen, and that they come here with this great music, and that we get to meet them."

And there was also— we got a reviewer. Which we were grateful for. We got the *Village Voice* to review it. And shortly thereafter, we got reviewed also in the *New York Times*. And we always thought about this as a very lucky thing. And many years later, we read that these guys— Tom Johnson was just starting at *Village Voice*, and he didn't have anything to review, until the Kitchen started. There were no concerts going on. So then he had, every week, he had the review. And the same for the other guy, John Rockwell, who had come from somewhere in the Midwest, and just was hired by the *New York Times*. So he hadn't— he made his career, actually, on those concerts. But we always thought it was

VASULKA (Cont.): the opposite, that... See, we couldn't offer those people any fee or anything; but at least they got the review in a major paper, you know?

(inaudible whisper)

BODE: Not that easily. We have some(?) (inaudible)

MAN: Were there other kinds of performances in the early days, besides the music?

VASULKA: Yeah. See, I can now tell one... Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, right? So there are four days left. See, Walter Wright showed up—that's how I remember it—he and Jane Wright, who was his wife then, they just showed up. And he was this kind of precocious Canadian kid, and he was working on the Scanimate, that famous synthesizer. And he was interested in performances. I think he had a lot to do with that we got into the performances—although he was by no means the first or the only. But how we got started was another... And he was working, actually, with People's Video Theater at that time. But this is what he wanted to do, to perform video and audio. So in the beginning, we might easily have been the first ones to do it, because we were doing, like, those performances with audio and video. You know, drifting(?) images and taking people in the audience and having them drift(?) and things like that. But we had no stamina for it, to do it, and not that much interest, and all these people took it over. And they usually brought their own equipment. They wheeled in synthesizers and boxes and cameras, and everything that was being used. And these were basically jam sessions. Bell Labs got

VASULKA (Cont.): interested. I don't know. That was, again, actually, through us, because— through (inaudible), 'cause he was going up to Bell Labs. And we invited them to have a concert. And again, you see, we thought we were so grateful that they would come. We said, "There are Bell Labs people coming!" But it was the opposite. They said, "We have an opportunity to show our stuff in Manhattan!" So they, again, brought their equipment with them, and this was audio and video. These were the early computer films. Ken Knowlton, Lillian Schwartz, Manny Ghent(?)...

BODE: Whitney brothers.

VASULKA: We never— they never came.

BODE: No?

VASULKA: No.

BODE: You're talking about those people actually coming.

VASULKA: Coming to our place.

BODE: Ok.

VASULKA: Out of that, eventually, we made a festival called Computer Festival. And unfortunately, it ran only twice, because after we left the Kitchen, nobody was interested in doing them, or there was not a lot...

BODE: When would that have been?

VASULKA: Hm?

BODE: When would that have been, the Computer Festival?

VASULKA: The first Computer Festival was in '72. And... Maybe '73 already. And then there was one more held outside the Kitchen. NYU, I think. They wanted to do annual. But the new director of the Kitchen, who came in after us, wasn't interested in that. He didn't believe in... He threw out basically everything that was computer and video. But that would have been amazingly early, if it had become an annual festival; it would be, by way, the longest running.

BODE: The Avant Garde Festival was happening during that time. (Vasulka: Yeah, yeah) The New York Avant Garde Festival, (Vasulka: Yeah, yeah) with Charlotte Moorman and Nam June. (inaudible)

VASULKA: Yeah, we participated in two of those. I guess 1970 and '71. And... When we had the Kitchen, we didn't have time for it. But Charlotte performed also in the Kitchen, of course(?) and Nam(?) several times.

BODE: So in terms of equipment, what kind of... How did that evolve, what the equipment was that was used? (Vasulka: Inaudible) Where did it come from?

VASULKA: That was personal belonging of Woody and Steina, basically. And then everybody brought in their own. And I picked up on Mickey's philosophy. I said, "Show for free, get the space for free; show for money, and just split it with us." But then I modified it right away and said, "Show for money, and do whatever you want to," because that's the way Mickey had done for us. So it was interesting that almost everybody gave us the money. There was nobody who took the whole box, you know—even if they all deserved it—because they felt, you know, that we printed the posters for them, and we did... The Kitchen was run out of this pocket, on this site, you know? It was cash, and it came just like that. It was our money. And there was some investment; we got it all back, by all the grants and authority(?) we got, you know, after that(?). But that's how it was run. So I got a lot(?) of money back into my pocket, if there was a good show. And I just remember again, Nam; he was the only one who wanted money. But he was as poor as anybody (inaudible) right now(?). And it was such a funny situation. I said, "Nam, here's your money." And he said, "No!" We said, "Well, take at least half of it." There was twenty bucks, I think, altogether. "Take ten." He said, "Well, I took a cab

VASULKA (Cont.): to get here.” And Charlotta says, “Nam, don’t even dream of taking money from these wonderful people!” “No, I shouldn’t,” says Nam, “I shouldn’t. Here, take it all.” I said, “No. It makes no... It’s your money. You should take it.” And we had... It was so—I— we were all, of course, laughing, but it was so funny, because he was, you know, he was still a poor man from a poor country; he really held onto his money. But in the end, he gave it to us. So which also con... Nam, you’re a contributor to the Kitchen in many ways. (they laugh)

MAN: Did Tony Conrad show films there?

VASULKA: Yeah. It was the first time we met. See, that... He came in as a composer. And he came in, and he had a film. And he said, “Do you have a projector?” And of course, we had, home, because Woody is also a filmmaker. So we brought down the projector. And he showed something, it was called *The Articulation of Boolean Algebra*. And he explained it to us.

BODE: Which was an early flicker film.

VASULKA: Yeah. Yeah, he also showed the flicker film. But there was another one, which is also a flicker— yeah, it’s all black and white. And he explained it, like Tony does. And we didn’t understand it, but we liked him very, very much. So when Woody couldn’t teach, because he hated teaching so much, he talked Jerry into splitting the

VASULKA (Cont.): line, so he would teach only half-time. And we got Tony in on the other half. So that's how Tony came into the...

BODE: This is... (Vasulka: So any...) Chronology-wise, you're jumping forward (inaudible)

VASULKA: I'm jumping way fast, because this is, like, in... We met Tony probably in '71 or latest, '72. And then we are in Buffalo in '75, having an opportunity to bring somebody in on Woody's line. And... Or he was at Antioch at that time, Tony. So we brought him in.

BODE: Paul Sharits had been at Antioch, right?

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah. Tony took Sharits' place. And then he came also into Buffalo.

BODE: Just one other question about the Kitchen. So the rent was paid for by the New York State Council on the Arts?

VASULKA: Yeah.

BODE: And was that just one year, or from year to year?

VASULKA: Ok. So the first year, it was actually our personal grant that we donated as rent. The next year... See, we got the money through a group called Perception. And who was Perception? It was me, Woody, and Eric Siegel. And the reason was...

BODE: That was your organization (inaudible), yeah?

VASULKA: Yeah. But you had to be an organization. (Bode: Had to be an organization)
You couldn't get money from New York State Council unless you were an organization.

BODE: Right, that's right.

VASULKA: So Howard suggested to Eric—Howard didn't know us—that he should find some worthy people, be a group. So Eric comes to us and says, "Let's be a group. (laughs) And let's call ourselves the Perception." So that's what... We had just met Eric; we didn't know him well then. But we were as impressed with him as he was with us, that we were in the same boat; we were the people who understood the tools, the importance of the signal, and we talked the same language, you know: tool making, tool building. So we got money as Perception. And the next year, we told Howard that we should really get money as the Kitchen. So Kitchen became a sub-project of Electronic Arts Intermix. See, Electronic Art Intermix was the umbrella; and under it were we, as the Kitchen; and then there was Perception; and the third one was, I think, what became the Tape Library. That was... And eventually became (inaudible)

BODE: It was part of Intermix.

VASULKA: But the Perception, next year, was Eric, Juan Downey, Beryl Korot, Ira Schneider, Frank Gillette...

BODE: Oh, really?

VASULKA: Yeah. And they...

BODE: And they were also involved in other groups...

VASULKA: ...they were the Raindance.

BODE: ...they were in other groups. They were Raindance.

VASULKA: They were Raindance, they were Raindance.

BODE: Had Raindance dispersed, or...?

VASULKA: I never understood why they didn't apply as Raindance, and why they wanted... I think that just— Howard had the prestige. Howard was a guy...

BODE: Howard Wise.

VASULKA: Howard Wise, who could get the money.

BODE: He had been a curator, is that right? (Vasulka: No) He was a funder. He was a...

VASULKA: No, he was a rich man.

BODE: Right.

VASULKA: He had earned money on camouflage paint. He was the inventor of camouflage paint.

BODE: (laughter) Oh, I did not... And he was a collector of kinetic art.

VASULKA: Yeah.

BODE: Is that so? 'Cause... No?

VASULKA: Now, he... See, this is what...

BODE: I thought there was a kinetic art connection in there...

VASULKA: There was.

BODE: ...and that was the jump to video.

VASULKA: No, you're jumping and I'm jumping. See, what's funny, he was in Cleveland. And he becomes a rich man. And he was very careful and very conservative, I thought, and very— an old man. And instead of doing what a careful conservative old man should do, he starts collecting technological art, and opening up a gallery—first in Cleveland, then he moved to New York. And because he never sold anything—there was just not a chance you would sell, let's say, a light sculpture—he bought it. He would always buy from every artist at least one artwork. So the last show he did at his Howard Wise Gallery was this Television as a Creative Medium. And then he was burned out. And he realized that he could lose endless money on it, and that it wasn't what he wanted to do. So then he just started losing money on Electronic Arts Intermix, because that was also a big money hole, and he never got anything back. But (inaudible) understood that that's what he wanted to do.

BODE: What happens before the point that you go to Buffalo? 'Cause you went from being in New York and being involved with the Kitchen... And what...? Can you say something about that period and that transition, and how you ended up in Buffalo?

VASULKA: Well, we just ended in Buffalo because there was a funny program in Buffalo that— Jerry O’Grady(?) was working in the English department there, and he could bring down students to New York City. They were the sightseeings. Are they still going on?

BODE: Oh, they— no, they’ve cancelled them fairly recently, five years ago. There were... What was it called? Studio in X New York? And actually, art departments participated, and I don’t know, maybe there was an English program, as well. (Vasulka: I think there was) So it really tapped into the different academic programs (inaudible)

VASULKA: Yeah, Jerry must’ve tapped into something. But he did one of those studio visits to us. And for us, it was a great blessing because, you know, we just sat home and all these people came in, and we did what we always did, with all these people who came in. But these people paid money for it, what everybody else was getting for free, you know? Because we had a lot of people visiting, all the time. Like, we would tape somebody, and they would want to see it. Or say when we taped Jimi Hendrix, you know, we got half of New York to want to see the tapes, so they were always coming in. So here came O’Grady, a strange, strange guy, like a priest or monk or something, remember?

BODE: Mm-hm.

VASULKA: With his group of students. And after the presentation, he said, "I have to get you up to Buffalo." And we said, "Yes, yes. Take us up to Buffalo, it's fine," you know? Like: No way. But he persisted. And finally, he said we would go up there for twelve weeks to teach something, there will be something at(?) media study. And these twelve weeks turned out to be six years, you know, before we knew it. (laughs)

MAN: When was that first twelve-week...?

VASULKA: That was the fall of '73.

WOMAN: And did you give up your place in New York then, or did you keep it?

VASULKA: No, that was the great thing. (Woman: You kept it) We didn't have to give it up. It was a beautiful loft, and we got a painter to pay the rent, which was all of two-hundred dollars. And he could paint there all day. But he would just go home at eight o'clock, and so we could come in there and crash any time we wanted to. And we had that situation going for a few years. That was very good, because we never intended to leave the city. We just loved New York, both of us. But, you know, once you are out of New York, you're out.

MAN: Yeah.

VASULKA: You are really out.

MAN: Yeah, there's something... Uh-huh.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: When did you step away from the Kitchen?

VASULKA: That's when we went to Buffalo.

MAN: At the same time?

VASULKA: Yeah. But we would have stepped out of the Kitchen anyhow, because you don't want to run a place like that; it takes too much time and energy. And it was fully capable of running without us by then. The second year, we weren't that involved, because there were so many other people who wanted to be involved.

MAN: Didn't you spend some time over in Europe also, at about that time, before you went to Buffalo?

VASULKA: The summer.

MAN: In Paris?

VASULKA: Yeah. Yeah. We traveled in Europe. It was sort of... I don't even remember. We must've been invited. And the trick is we gave everybody tapes who wanted them. I mean, out they went, you know, like that. So we got a lot of invitations to France forever after. And the French think we are much more famous than we are, because of those early tapes. (inaudible) So this is one of the greatest investments (laughs) we ever did, because I like France, I like to go to Paris; it's... We didn't do this in Germany, and lo and behold, we are totally unknown there. So that's the way to do it. Leave your (inaudible) card(?) everywhere.

MAN: When you got to Buffalo, when did you start— did you start building tools again then? Or were you building tools...

VASULKA: All along.

MAN: ...all along?

VASULKA: All along. We just— the tool building came almost as soon as we were doing video because the tools were so primitive, you know? And there was nothing off the shelf. There was nothing you could buy in a store. So it went into tool building right away. And, you know, we were already— as I said, I bought an audio synthesizer; that

VASULKA (Cont.): was the first thing we bought as a tool, in order to distort the images. So, you know, that was the only off the shelf we could find. And the reason that, like, when I... I taught the summer school. And it was very...

MAN: In Buffalo.

VASULKA: In Buffalo, yeah, that summer. And I was gonna get paid five-thousand dollars. And that was the price of (inaudible). So that was totally clear; I would teach, we would get the (inaudible)

MAN: And this was teaching high school kids.

VASULKA: No.

MAN: This was...?

VASULKA: This was actually— this was the university.

MAN: It was a summer program.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: 'Cause it ended up being— that program, then, I guess transformed to being high school.

VASULKA: Yeah, later.

MAN: Ok.

VASULKA: Now, the students that showed up there, one was Arnold Braglad(?). You know who he is?

MAN: Mm-hm, sure.

VASULKA: Yeah. That was a great blessing. I mean, he saved my life. I was so scared of teaching; I'd never done anything like that. And he showed up—shy, strange guy, very talented. And Terry Gross was there. And now I've rediscovered her. She runs a program called *Air? Fresh Air*.

WOMAN: *Fresh Air*. On the radio.

VASULKA: Yeah, it goes on six o'clock every night. And she's there. And she was— she's great on the air, and she was great in class.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: When you— you had mentioned before about buying an audio synthesizer and then using that to distort images. How— what was the connection? Just technically, simply, what was the... How did the audio synthesizer distort the image?

VASULKA: Ok. So we bought the audio synthesizer because we had used the Bookla at NYU, through Rhys Chatham. But we didn't really have access to it, and we knew we had to get our own. So when we bought the audio synthesizer, we bought it with the idea of feeding video signals in for audio tracks. But...

MAN: Feeding the video into the audio synthesizer.

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah, as a control voltage(?). Which, if you have heard any of our early tapes, they're all full of that. But then we put the audio synthesizer directly into the video connector on the monitor, and if you get sixty cycles you get one-half of it white and half of it black and— end of story, right? That was nice about this putneys(?) that were later called synthies, that they had very high frequency oscillators, way above the audible spectrum. God knows why. So you went just way up, and you went into the

VASULKA (Cont.): (inaudible) frequency, you divided it twice, three times, four times, or multiplied, I guess you say. I mean, you multiplied as far as the audio is; but the device was green(?), right?

BODE: Right.

VASULKA: So this was our introduction, actually, to how television works.

BODE: And you were, like, patching into, like, an SEG or something like that, that was, like...?

VASULKA: Yeah, also, yeah, in order to get...

BODE: Like the CG-1(?) that we saw this morning that... That kind of thing?

VASULKA: We did that, but we basically pointed the camera at the monitor.

BODE: Oh, I see. So it was just you displaying it on the monitor and V scanning.

VASULKA: Yeah, V scanning.

BODE: Uh-huh, ok.

VASULKA: We have no more(?) a program that we— oh, we had some, but we would do it, whatever we had to do. Now, right from the beginning, we were purists, in a sense; we thought that the signal should be pure and there shouldn't be any camera involved, and that it was bad to be using cameras and input; it should all be synthesized, you know? But that's kind of a fantasy we had. In reality, you can't really do that much, you know.

BODE: And then when you were in Buffalo, in that time... I mean, by the time you left Buffalo, you had built a very complicated digital image processing system with Jeffrey Shire(sp?). (Vasulka: Yeah) Right? And actually, a little bit before that, you had done things with George Brown? Is that his name? Commissioned him...

VASULKA: George Brown, we did in New York, mostly, while we were living there.

BODE: Oh, so you had already done that.

VASULKA: Yeah. That George Brown period is sort of 1970 to '74, mixed in with a little Eric Siegel. Then comes '74, in the summer, we buy the Rutt/Etra. And that was the beginning of our divorce, you know, artistically, because I wasn't half as interested in the Rutt/Etra as Woody was. And he was on it all the time anyhow. So I started going out; I started, you know, taking my camera to the car and driving, doing tapes like (inaudible) these kinds of things, you know. So that was that period. We also were sort of just using a lot of tools, not building any. And then this crazy student of ours comes and starts

VASULKA (Cont.): suggesting that he can do this and he can do that (inaudible).

“Good, you do that. You wanna build us a filter? Sure, build us a filter.” And, you know,

“Oh, you think you can do that?” And Jeffrey would say, “I can build a jamblock(?)”

“Build us a jamblock,” and Woody would say, “I’ll give you a good grade.” This kid came from the engineering department. And he was just so funky and crazy, and he played the violin also and...

BODE: Long hair and... (inaudible)

VASULKA: Long hair that stuck out this way, on both sides, and nothing on the top.

And he was barely twenty then. So when he built this (inaudible) And they were good.

The guy really understood what he was doing. We got very interested in a design that had come—that we had gotten from Binghamton. See, at that time, we dreamt about this great communication with Binghamton and Ralph. And that’s before you get there. And the idea is that there’s a guy there called Don MacArthur. And he had built...

MAN: That wasn’t before—I was there before Don.

VASULKA: You were there before Don? (inaudible)

MAN: I got there at the end of ’73.

VASULKA: Sorry. Anyhow, so tell me about Don, when he built the buffer.

MAN: Well, it wasn't a buffer, it was an A to D converter.

MAN: It was meant to be a time base corrector, though, wasn't it?

MAN: Yeah, Don and I... I had built an A to D converter for video that was sixteen shades of gray. And Don and I were playing with it and talking about it, and saying how we could make a time base corrector for video. And he said he had a great idea of how to make an eight bit video rate A to D converter. And he sat down and started working on it. And it never could go fast enough to do video at really fast rates. But it looked great at the slow rates, because it made a lot of columns in the image and made these— each little scanline within the columns had constant shades of gray, so it was, like, holding the images and— or holding the shade of gray for a number of pixels. And it was this kind of digitizer with stripes.

VASULKA: So it didn't hold the full image in?

MAN: No, it didn't hold the image at all. It was... It only held the image for a fraction of one scanline. It was basically just an A to D converter.

VASULKA: Yeah, but it made those beautiful funky squares.

MAN: Yeah. Well, they were more streaks. They were very... (Vasulka: Yeah) It had a defined width that you could adjust; but they were one scanline high. So each... It gave it very fine definition vertically, and very coarse definition horizontally. (Vasulka: Yeah) And it made very nice images.

VASULKA: Very nice.

MAN: But it was— originally, it was supposed to be an A to D converter for a time base corrector we were designing. And it worked out more as an art machine, as a byproduct, because it never quite did what he invented it to do.

MAN: What was his background? He was an electronics person? Isn't he a mathematician?

MAN: He was— yeah.

MAN: He's a mathematician. See, he needed some of your expertise to...

MAN: He was working for Singer(?), I think, at that point.

MAN: And then, Steina, you and Woody (inaudible) or what was that.

VASULKA: Let us— I'll come back to Jeffrey; let's follow this for a while. So he was... Why did he hang around the center? Was he out of work then, or was (inaudible)

MAN: No, a friend of his was a student of Ralph's. (Vasulka: Yeah?) And he brought him along one day to a show that was at the TV Center, and started hanging out. The student was hanging out with us, spending a lot of time there. So his friend was also hanging out. And then there was a point where he stopped working for the company he was working at, and... Well, actually, no, I think that was before he worked for Singer. I forget where he worked...

MAN: No, wasn't he teaching? You were talking about (inaudible)

MAN: Yeah, he was teaching.

MAN: He was at Cortland College, up in (inaudible).

MAN: Right. 'Cause he lived in Cortland.

MAN: Yeah.

MAN: And he would come down and visit. And then he... Right. He stopped teaching there, and spent a lot more time in Binghamton, and then eventually got a job at Singer, working there and downtown(?).

VASULKA: So what did he teach you?

MAN: I don't know. Mistakes are good? (laughs)

VASULKA: Now, eventually... You have to give him a bit of credit for your (inaudible)

MAN: No.

VASULKA: No?

MAN: No.

VASULKA: Not at all?

MAN: No, the A to D and the line storage stuff that I did was before that. That was something that he saw that I had done, and his ideas started springing out of that.

(inaudible; Vasulka: Inaudible) frame buffer that I did that held the 64 by 64 frame came after that, but it wasn't based on anything that he did.

VASULKA: I see. I thought there had been a connection.

MAN: No.

VASULKA: So you are...

MAN: The connection was that we were gonna design this time base corrector and he was gonna design the first part, which was the A to D, and I was gonna do the memory part to store the image, because I had already done a line buffer. (inaudible) I made this device that made squares out of the image. And it looked sort of like a frame buffer, but it was not held—it only held one scanline, and then repeated it, and then held another scanline and repeated it. And so I was gonna do the memory side of the time base corrector, and he was gonna do a new A to D that was gonna be... 'Cause my A to D was only sixteen shades of gray. And so he was gonna do this other one. And that was—it was eventually called the Ralph, I think, (inaudible)

MAN: Spatial (inaudible)

MAN: Spatial and(?) intensity digitizer.

MAN: (inaudible)

VASULKA: (inaudible) Yeah. That's interesting. Because, I mean, you came from Paris directly to Binghamton?

MAN: No. No, I came— I actually only spent a little bit of time in Paris, in the middle of winter, and suddenly to... I went back to Amsterdam after that and...

VASULKA: So we met in Amsterdam.

MAN: I don't...

VASULKA: Did we meet in...?

MAN: ...think we actually met over there. (Vasulka: No?) I think what you guys told me in the seventies was that you guys had arrived there and met Jack and his people, like a week or something after I had left.

VASULKA: Ah.

MAN: And so we had just missed over there. I don't think (Vasulka: I see) we actually met until— at Ralph's house in Binghamton.

VASULKA: So— but we knew about it, in other words, because there was also Kit...

MAN: Kit Fitzgerald.

VASULKA: Yeah, was there.

MAN: Right.

VASULKA: And Jack Moore(sp?). Yeah, we met them in Amsterdam, and also in Paris, because they were working for Sony in Paris.

MAN: Right. He was doing store windows for Sony.

VASULKA: Yeah, right. Ok, so you were just legendary, but you were not a real person until Binghamton. (laughs) That's interesting. So anyhow, but to us, Don was very (inaudible) because we had decided to go in with the Experimental Television Center. And everything we developed, they were there; and everything they developed, we were there. And to that extent, we bought an LSI-11. And I'll find the invoice, if it was late '75 or early '76. But to have a computer home, in your home environment in '76 is pretty hip, is pretty... And we didn't know many other people. They also bought an LSI-11. And that was the end of the collaboration. They could never get theirs to work. And of course, we didn't get ours to work either, if it hadn't been for Jeffrey, because it was all to get the register and then assign them, and it was an octal system, and yeah, it was really heavy. And the keyboard was a teletype. So every time you pushed a key, it would go (makes

VASULKA (Cont.): noises). Whenever you're writing in those addresses, it was just...

And it had to be booted up with a...

MAN: With a tape ribbon.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: Was it?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: Yeah. Was that one with the little flippers(?)?

VASULKA: No.

MAN: That was a different one.

MAN: No. That was different.

MAN: But this was keyboard and ribbon.

VASULKA: Yeah. And we eventually found a way... There's a paper ribbon. And the boot was on it. And that was only that much coat(?), you know? Seven rows across, you know, in various configurations. So we just took it and glued it together, and then it hung there as a loop. And every time the computer went down—it would start up in the morning—it just went through the loop and stopped, and waited for the next day, (inaudible) the loop and stop. And it was kind of funny, you know? That's how we ran it. But before, we had been running those things that would go across— you know, you would go in and... Lots of paper then on the other side, you know, like this kind of a high pile.

MAN: Right. What did you use the computer for? Or what could it do?

VASULKA: This is what was interesting. We bought the computer mostly to control videos. We would have... Because it was so unpredictable, and these oscillators were flying all over the place; no frequency would stay put. And so we said, "Computer, that is the way we will control it." And truly, after Jeffrey had been through it all, we could control it; everything was so predictable and so dull we were dying. We said, (laughter) "We'll buy a two(?)." And it is absolutely controllable, predictable, (inaudible; they laugh) And Jeffrey fixed that. He built a— he just wired those cables to tell(?) the output going back into the input. (laughter) And created (inaudible) patterns(?) like, you know, guaranteed never it would repeat. Yeah, random number generators. Ralph— I

VASULKA (Cont.): mean, Walter was printing(?) also random number generators. He did everything to get away from this orderly thing called computer. Yeah. But Don did the first thing. He made us the horizontal and the vertical division of the raster.

MAN: I see(?). Don MacArthur did this.

VASULKA: Yeah. And Jeffrey came in. And for the rest of his time with us, he was going to win over Don MacArthur. He was gonna squeeze this guy out of our system. He was going to somehow do the design so well that you would have to throw out this whole Don thing. And it ended with him having a tremendous respect for him, because you know, mathematically, he said it was so sound, what Don did, that it was, you know... But it's all built on it. So we call our device the MacArthur-Shire synthesizer, because we can't get away from MacArthur. He was that important. But a funny thing is that genlock was the problem, the phase lock loop. I mean, to get this difference between the computer and video, which is— we— the video people screamed for years and years, because the computers couldn't care less about us. And it wasn't jibing; it was always dropping and throwing these glitches and everything. And Jeffrey looked at it and couldn't figure it out. So two student assistants came from the engineering department. And Jeffrey immediately threw this at them. "Make a phase lock— genlock (inaudible) system." And they gave up. And when they gave up, Jeffrey realized that this wasn't easy. And he sat down and made it. And it is a clock-like... You wouldn't believe. I mean, it was just the clock that runs the world; it could be the atomic clock. It was just a masterpiece. So this

VASULKA (Cont.): is the end of our stay in Buffalo. And Jeffrey is hired in California to build a phase lock loop. They tell him, "Look, there is a big problem between computers and video. We don't know what to do about it." And Jeffrey says, "I know." And they say, "Yes. Just take your time, young man. This is your assignment." And Jeffrey came in the next day and had the design. Of course. And they said, "This is very good. It's very promising. Now, work it out." And for eighteen months, (laughter) they let Jeffrey— they held(?) him in the (inaudible), and he got this fantastic salary, you know? Until they believed that this was a sound design.

BODE: Can you talk about the move to New Mexico, and what precipitated that?

VASULKA: Well...

BODE: And when was it? That was in seventy...?

VASULKA: It was in '80. (inaudible) The thing is, we never wanted to go to Buffalo, and we never wanted to join academia. And then, against his will, Woody was hired. And it was tempting. There was very little teaching, and it wasn't a very good salary; it was actually about seventeen-thousand(?) when he began(?). But it was an easy life, and everything was cheap and things like that. But in the heart of hearts, we knew that Buffalo was not our place; we were misplaced there. We just had a great faculty, good communication, creative associates. Buffalo was a wonderful place. So I remember that

VASULKA (Cont.): one day, we are working, the three of us—me and Woody and Jerry—and Jerry says, in his funny New England accent, “Well, now we have to start thinking about tenure.” And Woody says, “Ten years?! I’m not gonna be in this place for ten years!” He completely... And I said, “Woody, Woody, he’s not saying ‘ten years.’” “I don’t know what he’s saying, I just am not gonna be in Buffalo for ten years!” (they laugh) So sure enough, against Woody’s will, he got the tenure. Just right there, you know, within a year. And then there was nothing to do but to leave. So... I mean, he got the Guggenheim, so we could physically get out of there. And we didn’t close any doors. Just like with New York, you know? We didn’t keep our loft, but we had the loft on such that we could come back, and the position was kept open, because Jerry wanted to hire (inaudible) people and... So that worked. Then we always got the slips from the university, “Your salary has increased. You know have twenty-five thousand.” And they kept coming, those slips, and it was thirty-two thousand. And I go to the bank, because we wanted to build a house, and I say, “Oh, my husband has a decent salary. Here, this is his latest raise.” (laughs) And they gave us (inaudible, laughs)

BODE: You know, this is actually jumping back, because I jumped forward through the Buffalo years, actually, very quickly. (Vasulka: Yeah) When you were there with Woody in Buffalo, Hollis Frampton was there, and Paul Sharits was there...

VASULKA: Tony.

BODE: Tony at some point came in, (Vasulka: Tony Conrad) Tony Conrad.

VASULKA: No, very early, very early.

BODE: Early?

VASULKA: Yeah.

BODE: Tony was there. Brian Henderson, was he— (Vasulka: Yeah) He was there?

VASULKA: Yeah.

BODE: And that was the department, wasn't it?

VASULKA: James Blue.

BODE: James Blue was there, documentary filmmaker.

VASULKA: Yeah. And at that time...

BODE: And is there some... Tell us about the interaction, or about that... I mean, that's a pretty remarkable faculty to bring together (inaudible)

VASULKA: It was very remarkable. And in the beginning, there was an incredible affinity among the professors. Brian was sort of always on the outer loop, but it didn't matter; he was just there. He was the youngest, and he was a little scared of the rest of the us, and it was ok. But for the rest of us, we were just, you know, having the same issues, being interested in the same matters. We were the underdogs, because we were video. But then as soon as we turned computers, Hollis got all perked up, because he was... He was not a courageous man, you know? He feared it a little bit, both the physicality and the mentality of computer. And also what his colleagues would think, as a traitor for the film and photography, that he would go over. So he used us to tiptoe into the computer realm. And as you know, he became very dedicated. He was (inaudible) and...

BODE: Yeah, and then he built a buffer.

VASULKA: Yeah, he built a buffer. He was...

BODE: Yeah, the Gollum Machine, (Vasulka: That's right) as he called it.

VASULKA: Yeah. He even got into Harvard(?). So that was very direct, the communication with—I mean, it became very practical, with Hollis, because we were sort of seducing him into this digital realm. With Sharits, we had so much more in common, because we were also doing a lot of flicker. Like that little flicker I showed yesterday, with the...

BODE: Mm-hm, the circle, yeah.

VASULKA: ...circle. That, we did after we came to Buffalo, but before we saw any of Paul's work. And when we saw his work, we couldn't believe it; when he saw our work, he couldn't believe it, the kinship, the relationship we had. So we did try to collaborate on some kind of a solid color(?) machine with Paul. It's now in Santa Fe. But it was (inaudible)

BODE: Hm. What sort of thing was it? What do you mean by...?

VASULKA: It's an RGB machine. It has strobes in it. You could probably describe it better. Did you ever see it? (inaudible)

MAN: That would strobe onto film?

VASULKA: Strobe onto film.

MAN: Like a computer contr— the program in the computer, and then...

VASULKA: Yeah. (inaudible) program...

MAN: ...transfer to film.

VASULKA: ...how much red, how much green, how much blue. In sixteen steps. You know?

MAN: So it'd be a way for Paul to computerize his structures that he was doing in film.

VASULKA: Yeah. But at that time, (Man: Inaudible) he wasn't interested in that anymore; he was interested in other things, in painting. But it didn't matter, it was a really good thing to do for us. You know.

MAN: Mm-hm. Was that some of the same—I don't know if this is exactly true, but—that you and Woody and then those filmmakers that existed five years, six years earlier when you were in New York being involved with video; and then in that community, there were also all these filmmakers. Actually, they'd even include those guys. Hollis probably was in New York.

VASULKA: We had never heard of Hollis. We never heard of him.

MAN: You hadn't heard. 'Cause he was at—I forget where—Hunter College, I think.

VASULKA: Oh, yeah.

MAN: And then Paul was in Antioch, and he— where Tony was. And he was out there also. And again, I'm wondering about Jonas Mekas and the New American Cinema people. (Vasulka: Jonas, we knew because...) Because in a sense, that's what Hollis and Tony and Paul were part of.

VASULKA: Yeah, we had met Kabelka(sp?) early, like in '67, through Alfonse(?), again. We knew him. And Jonas, we knew because he kept coming to the Kitchen and writing bad reviews. Really vitriolic reviews about how stupid all the video was.

MAN: Is that right? Because his reviews of film were to be totally in love with the filmmakers (Vasulka: Yeah) and their courageous, heroic visions.

VASULKA: Yeah. He was very cranky. Actually, the only people he didn't give bad reviews were me and Woody; he gave us moderate. He didn't somehow dare to really throw it out. But for all the rest of what he saw in the Kitchen... There was a point, I saw him coming, walking up the steps to come into the Kitchen, and I thought: I should tell Jonas to go home. I mean, these are kids, people who are showing maybe for the first time; they don't need this, to be touted in his diary in Village Voice as being totally incompetent and (inaudible). He was angry that video always had sound. He said, "In film, we didn't have sound. We thoroughly investigated the material of film before we ever dreamed about adding sound to it. And these hippie kind of superficial so-called video artists..." Yeah. He was the one to complain that film was film, but video was art;

VASULKA (Cont.): and that video artists called themselves video artists, and film, filmmakers. But he didn't understand that it had nothing to do with any of us. I mean, video people didn't come out... You just didn't say video maker, I don't know why. But he blamed us for some... I mean, he was just a cranky old man. I like it that he's now a full-time video person; I love it.

MAN: Yeah, is he? (inaudible)

VASULKA: Yeah, he doesn't part from his camcorder.

MAN: Mm-hm. So you had experienced that when you were in New York. And in Buffalo, you were again with that same group. I mean, in a sense, in terms of film. Not Jonas, particularly, but like filmmakers who... And was there some of that kind of attitude among— that Paul had in that (inaudible)

VASULKA: No, it was— as far as I was concerned, it was (inaudible) There was even a period when we thought we would join the Kitchen and the Millennium. We were talking to Howard Gutenplan(?) about it, before he found his wonderful place that (inaudible)

MAN: The Millennium.

VASULKA: Yeah. Because he was...

MAN: But Ken Jacobs says that he started the Millennium.

VASULKA: Ken Jacobs did. Yeah, but Howard was just running it. And we were talking to Howard (Man: I see) about... Because he didn't have any money to run it, and the Kitchen was being successful, that we should join forces. So there was that kind of a kinship and friendship between those two places. And through Millennium, we knew quite a bit of filmmakers. And so anyway, Stan(?) (inaudible) came to the Kitchen, and... So we really was very interested always with film. And we met Andy and... So it was like, you know, that. But they had no interest in us. None. Zero. There was just no way they were gonna sit down and watch video. That was a kind of a punishment no filmmaker would take. And since Woody was a filmmaker, (Man: inaudible) and I came out of music, it never bothered us. We were not any kind of missionaries for video. I mean, we couldn't care less if everybody hated video. But we were just so bemused by this attitude of this kind of a—now I realize—incredible arrogance on their part. And that's just what it was. Not Tony, because Tony was already— you know, Tony was already— he was, anyhow, more music than film, has always been.

MAN: Yeah, mathematics, systems.

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah.

MAN: And then when you were in Buffalo, Jerry was—who I remember hearing being called Ghengis O’Grady. Did you ever hear that term?

VASULKA: No.

MAN: I think that may’ve been... In fact, Ken Jacobs credited himself with naming Jerry that, so that was the Binghamton name for Jerry (inaudible) ’cause he sort of took over everything. He had educational communications at the university, and then he had media study, and then he had—I mean, he had his hands in a lot of projects.

VASULKA: Yeah, he did.

MAN: And he brought lots of people to Buffalo, right? (Vasulka: Yeah) So in some ways, you got to experience a different version of the Kitchen, in the sense of people coming through constantly.

VASULKA: It was sensational. We met basically everybody. And, you know, they usually would end up in our place, and we would have these deep talks. It was very good. So I remember there was a conference in Buffalo. It was a round table, like maybe five or six people on each end (inaudible) that makes up the room, twenty, twenty-five, thirty people. And I remember Ken Jacobs at one point jumping up on the table.

MAN: Oh, I heard about— yeah.

VASULKA: You heard about this.

MAN: That was like, from second or third... (Vasulka: Laughs) I wanna hear what you say.

VASULKA: No, that's just how I met Ken Jacobs.

MAN: Oh, really?

VASULKA: He jumped up on it, he stomped on it, up and down, you know? And he called one guy just a blood fag—which he was. I mean, he was homosexual. And in '73, '74, that wasn't ok. So that was pretty tough, to just blunt that out and... It was... So... The filmmakers were very...

MAN: What was the— you were there, though, you saw it?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: What was the gist? Why did Ken do that?

VASULKA: I think he wanted to be avant garde. I don't remember what was the reason, but... I mean, people did things like that then, remember? It wasn't... Now it would be, I think...

MAN: That was with art— with Jerry and various administrators, university types?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: That's kind of how...

VASULKA: Fundraisers.

MAN: The story was always characterized to me as Ken finally blowing up about art administrators, (Vasulka: Yeah) who actually destroyed what art was about.

VASULKA: That's right.

MAN: And that this was this thing of just lashing out and saying that they might be trying to administrate all this art, but that they were actually destroying it. That's how I... I'm not even sure where I heard that.

VASULKA: Yeah. I remember it. There was, like, a guy from the Rockefeller Foundation, from the Ford Foundation...

MAN: Ok, so that's... Uh-huh.

VASULKA: All these people.

MAN: Anyway. So it was film people, video people, and then there were music people also in Buffalo, right? 'Cause there was the Creative Associates, was that what it was called?

VASULKA: Yeah. But we never managed to get together with them. I mean, we talked to Reeger(?) and Hiller(?) several times. And...

MAN: Uh-huh, who was in the music department.

VASULKA: Yeah, he was very much in favor of it, but...

MAN: Hiller was the one... Is he the one that taught Cage the computer? (Vasulka: Yeah) That was Reeger(?) and Hiller.

VASULKA: Yeah, Reeger and Hiller did the, like, harpsichord, that piece. HP Harpsichord(?). Yeah. And Morton Feldman was there, but he wasn't interested in electronic arts. But there was definitely an interest; it just never happened. It was... They were in another location on campus, and it couldn't be done. So we started just buying audio synthesizer (inaudible). And this is where you guys (inaudible).

MAN: Here at Alfred.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: Yeah, we were talking yesterday about how difficult it was to connect— or that it was impossible, as you said, to connect all the engineers and the music program and the...

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: So in 1980, you and Woody moved to New Mexico, and...?

VASULKA: Yeah. That's the end of (inaudible)

MAN: Why Santa Fe?

VASULKA: Why Santa Fe? It was a kind of... Woody opens the letter from Guggenheim. And you know, Guggenheim, they don't tell you; they don't say, "Congratulations, you have gotten our fellowship." They say, "You may be considered. Please name the money you want." That's their letter of acceptance, very cool. But since I already had gotten one, I knew what it meant. And I said, "Woody, you got the fellowship! Let's get out of here." (Man: Laughs) And then the next sentence is, "Santa Fe." I was just saying something, sort of being funny. And then we went to Santa Fe to see if it was interesting, and it was. So... But (inaudible) said Santa Fe. Because it sounds so good. Like: Sha-la-la. (they laugh)

MAN: For a European ear, particularly, (inaudible; laughter) this sound and... Yeah.

MAN: Were you also on a board selected by the president for something one time?

VASULKA: No. What president?

MAN: I thought I read somewhere that you were one some panel or something selected by the president to represent video art or some (inaudible)

VASULKA: No.

MAN: I read that somewhere.

VASULKA: No. I might be making myself more famous than I am.

(inaudible voice)

MAN: While you were still in Buffalo, there was a conference there called Nuts and Bolts. (Vasulka: Yeah) Was that something that...

MAN: Walter Gonyevsky(?) put together.

VASULKA: Huh?

MAN: That was his name, Walter Gonyevsky (Vasulka: Yeah) put that together, sort of.

VASULKA: That was Walter Gonyevsky, that's right.

MAN: Yeah. Put together Nuts and Bolts.

MAN: Yeah, that's what I was—I wasn't sure you were involved in that. (inaudible)

VASULKA: Oh, very much.

MAN: I know you were there a lot, I just wasn't sure if you were involved in organizing that...

VASULKA: Well, we were very much involved...

MAN: That's where my father met you guys, 'cause he came— (Vasulka: Yeah) he came to that, and that's when I (Vasulka: He came to that) introduced you to him.

VASULKA: Yeah. That was the beginning of that. And a lot of good people came. And Woody had seen some work, film work from a graduate student in Utah—because a lot of things were going on in Utah then. Ivan and the Sullivans were there. Computer work. So he invites this graduate student, whose name is James Clark(sp?). And he didn't get his air ticket in time, and he was so poor he couldn't pay for it, so Jerry paid for the air ticket, and said, "When you get reimbursement from SUNY, you'll send it to me." And this kid never did. And Jerry sent him a few notes, and eventually he gave up. So he didn't get the air ticket. And the next thing we hear is that this guy is the founder and president of Silicon Graphics. Multimillionaire. So we are (laughs) thinking of asking him for the money. "How 'bout that air ticket?"

MAN: That air ticket. (laughter)

VASULKA: Salt Lake City to Buffalo. (laughs) Remember, you saw that film, didn't you, the Kline Bottle? You remember this film about a guy who walks around in a room, and (Vasulka: Yeah) he has a tool in his hand, and he pulls down on wires.

MAN: I never saw it.

MAN: It was at the conference.

MAN: Yeah? (inaudible)

VASULKA: We got a copy of it. I still have it.

MAN: Oh, do you?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: Yeah, I remember being very impressed by the...

VASULKA: Oh! He was (inaudible)

MAN: And he was talking— the machine, at the point where he was using it for that, had a hand grip with wires going to the ceiling, but now he was gonna be doing this new version that had infrared lights on it or something and was wireless, and a helmet that, instead of a big— being(?) attached to the ceiling, was now gonna have lights, gonna be wireless. (Vasulka: Yeah) It was this whole no... And it was virtual reality. But it was back before, I think, the term was ever...

VASULKA: It was 1974. So when they started talking about virtual reality, where you could see 3-D things, you could walk around the things in the helmet, I said, “What’s the big deal? I saw this in 1974 in Buffalo.”

MAN: Wasn’t it 1976?

VASULKA: ’6, maybe, yeah.

MAN: I think it was, ’cause I had— I was already living with Gary Hill, over in the Catskills, and then went back for that, went to Buffalo for that.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: And that would’ve been ’76.

VASULKA: But it was the same thing. You were in a room, you put on these 3-D goggles, a whole helmet, and you would have a thing in your hand, and you could walk around and draw in space. So, you know.

MAN: There was actually another— was it the same— no, it was a different conference that Jerry put together, where Robert Ashley came, the guys from Sonic Arts Union came. I think it was in a bank...

MAN: Wasn't that at the same one?

MAN: ...in a bank downtown. I don't think it was the same one, but it could... Does it ring a bell?

VASULKA: No.

MAN: (inaudible)

MAN: Gordon Mooma(?) and...

MAN: Gordon Mooma.

VASULKA: Or was it the same time?

MAN: I think it was at that same conference.

MAN: I don't think so. No, I think it was different. In fact, I'm almost sure it was, 'cause Walter Gayevsky did Nuts and Bolts, and it was on that Amherst campus.

VASULKA: No, no.

MAN: And this was something downtown.

VASULKA: Oh, *that* one.

MAN: I think it was in downtown Buffalo, 'cause we were in these...

VASULKA: Oh, the Nuts and Bolts... Yeah, that was...

MAN: It was the Amherst campus.

VASULKA: ...out of Amherst campus. This one that we're talking about...

MAN: Ok, maybe I'm getting them confused then. It was, like, a design conference.

VASULKA: I know what it was, it was in the end of Main Street, the Marine Midland one(?) or something.

MAN: For the concert.

VASULKA: Yeah, that— no, for the conference we went to.

MAN: Oh, for the conference.

MAN: 'Cause Sutherland(?) was there. Wasn't he there?

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's...

MAN: Actually, can you say something, because you... I'm pretty sure it was at that Nuts and Bolts that you met my father, Harold.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: Can you say something about what... Because I was in Binghamton at that time, so I actually had... You know, I was there for the conference, then I was back in Binghamton and involved with the Experimental Television Center. But I think you

MAN (Cont.): continued to have—well, you did—you continued to have some contact and some (inaudible)

VASULKA: See, Harold—Harrold(?), as we call him; he's not Harold, he's Harrold(?). He was very proud of that, because (inaudible) name. He, like Pere, Harold and Pere. (Man: Mm-hm, [inaudible] name) Yes, these are names of kings from the tenth century. (laughter) He had a presentation there. And what could he have shown then? Would that have been a ring module(?) or would it have been (inaudible) already?

MAN: '76?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: I think it was the vocoder. I think the vocoder was '77.

VASULKA: Yeah, but I think he gave a general lecture.

MAN: Well, it could've been about the talk about it.

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: Or, you know, the concept or the... (Vasulka: Yeah) Possible.

VASULKA: That was a very impressive lecture he gave. And— is that the right time? If it's the same time, I think he just (Man: inaudible) had a lot to say about his past and what he had designed in the past and... I remember we were so grateful for Guyevsky, to have discovered this guy. You know, I found him there, right on the doorstep. And then we visited him and he visited us and so, back and forth. Then we sort of witnessed this whole vocorder come into being, slowly, you know. And would be adding features, and we would listen to any new feature coming in and... Well, it was very interesting, it was very interesting. And I took a tape recorder out there? Yeah. Do you have those tapes?

MAN: That are— you were playing violin.

VASULKA: Oh, is that the...?

MAN: Is that what you mean?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: I have a sample tape. I don't have...

VASULKA: No, no, no, videotape. I took a video camera out...

MAN: No, I don't have it.

VASULKA: ...to Tonawanda. And then I took (Man: I'd love to see those) a violin out to Tonawanda.

MAN: Yeah? Hm.

VASULKA: I should copy them. (Man: Oh, yeah) Now that I'm going through the tapes.

MAN: Yeah, oh, that'd be fabulous.

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah. Now, of course, they're valuable; then they were nothing, they were just tapes. I have him playing.

MAN: Oh, that'd be great.

VASULKA: With just the sound of the vocoder (Man: inaudible) I have it in sound and image.

MAN: Hm. Wow. Don't have it in image. (laughter) Great, cool. 'Cause he came over and then visited you guys, also.

VASULKA: Ah, yeah.

MAN: In your space (inaudible; Vasulka: Ah, yeah) 'Cause I remember coming to visit him, and then it seemed like a real natural, easy thing, that we went over to your place and...

VASULKA: Yeah, definitely.

MAN: I wanted to ask you about the TV shows you made, 'cause that was my first introduction to your work. Was it WNET?

VASULKA: Yeah.

MAN: No. Was it? No, it was...

VASULKA: Not WNET.

MAN: Boston.

VASULKA: What's it...? No, no, no.

MAN: I mean—I'm sorry—it was Buffalo, the Buffalo station.

VASULKA: Buffalo, yeah.

MAN: WNED?

VASULKA: D, 'NED.

MAN: 'NED.

MAN: 'NED, oh yeah.

VASULKA: (inaudible)

MAN: When was that?

VASULKA: That was '78, '79. We got a grant... This, Jerry did for us. He raised—I sent in a big grant in Toniska(?) to make six programs. And it was all written out, what they would be about and everything, and it was with the guy who ran this station, the station manager, Channel 17 in Buffalo. And they were gonna get our time base corrector out of it, plus, I think, five-thousand dollars. Which they took gleefully. No, they also got a camera. That was our first PortaPak, was the one that was bought for the station, and we got to use. You know, sixteen-hundred(?) single. And then we started editing. And we got a wonderful editor, young kid, very ambitious. And it took a certain time. And they were totally livid that we were using studio time, we were taking advantage of the station. And the station manager sent his lackey down to tell us that the station would be perfectly

VASULKA (Cont.): happy with two half-hours. They would... And we said, "No way. We're gonna make six." And so it was the same every Public Television station was, and maybe still is; there was this great downstairs, where the engineers were and the production unit. And they were upbeat and gung-ho and interested in experimenting. And then there was always this dreadful upstairs, where they just— they had no imagination and couldn't imagine how the public could view this kind of... You know, protecting the public from the terrible experimental stuff that could possibly be shown on the air. And sure enough, they showed the programs at midnight.

MAN: Mm-hm, I saw them.

VASULKA: At midnight?

MAN: Yeah. I was home visiting, and there was a horror movie that was ending, and then the next beat, up came Woody and Steina, (they laugh) talking about image processing.

VASULKA: I think we have a TV Guide to prove that (inaudible; they laugh)

WOMAN: So that's when you first saw them?

MAN: Mm-hm. Not the TV show, the tapes that I have that I showed you, that actually, the juniors watched the other night, Monday night.

VASULKA: Yeah, on Monday nights, juniors watch *Vasulka Video*.

MAN: (laughs) Yeah, right.

VASULKA: It was called *Vasulka Video*, wasn't it?

MAN: Uh-huh, I think it was, yeah. Those are pretty wonderful tapes.

VASULKA: They're ok, they're kind of... (inaudible)

MAN: They're informational and they're... They're actually very— they're, in a sense, almost like a conference presentation about work (inaudible) very good. So was there any kind of obligation that the station had to play them?

VASULKA: No, not really. They did, because we had made them, you know. (Man: Uh-huh) No, I don't really think they had any need(?) to do that.

MAN: To jump forward a little bit to Santa Fe, so how did your involvement change, being in Santa Fe? What did you— 'cause you ended up then traveling to more... You weren't teaching or connected to one institution. So you were suddenly connected to many of them.

VASULKA: Yeah. No, we just did very well with grants for a long time in the beginning, culminating with going to Japan. And we could do our own work. And everything changes, you know. Our image has changed. I came there and just looked out, you know, at nature and said, "I cannot do this." You know, I mean, this is cliché, this is nature, this is landscape. But, you know, then I tumbled headlong into it and have done a lot of work like that since. And there's very little indoor space. And we have little indoor space, but so does everybody else. It's hard to get large spaces. And we have always had big lots. And so it's still hurting; I mean, were still thinking of how to get a hangar or some kind of a building to, you know, work in. We rent one now, outside our home. But— so the work changes according to the physical space you have available. We didn't know that, really, but it did. So Woody went really headlong into computers, because it takes very little space. And I've done some traveling. And now it's very tough, because there is no grant money, of course, (inaudible), so we have to live off our wits, because you know, you don't really want to go the (inaudible) route, if you can help it, because I think it's just too time consuming. But it certainly would be nice to get that kind of money, be able to sell a single installation for between hundred-and-fifty and two-hundred-fifty-thousand. But... It's the other way of going, you know? So... It's, you

VASULKA (Cont.): know, like we get these kind of deals, like I was telling you about this morning. So we have...

MAN: Mm-hm, (inaudible)

VASULKA: We are cheap people, we have little money and buy really cheap, and live in luxury, you know, by having way overrated the equipment that we got for almost nothing. And, say, Nam and Gary(?), they went the other way; they can afford to have very high class equipment, because they own a lot of money. And it's just, like, two different lifestyles. And I'm so used to living out of the seat of my pants, not knowing which way— if I'm gonna have money in the bank or if I'm gonna owe a tremendous amount that by now, I'm so used to it that it doesn't touch me. I don't care.

MAN: And the traveling now is a big part of what you do, right?

VASULKA: Yeah, because that's where the money is. You know. There's no money in New Mexico.

MAN: So is that— when you were saying before about how— where the spaces where you lived, that that changes your work— so I would assume that somehow... Suddenly, you live in a bigger space, because of all these spaces— do you think that that's true?

VASULKA: Well, I mean, it's outer footage versus indoor footage. That's one tremendous change, you know? It changes everything. And... Yeah, it... If you know our tapes, before and after, you know, there was a change there. There just is.

MAN: I just— I'm not even sure what the question, but I know the experiences I've had being in Europe really has totally changed my sense of what's possible, and how I feel about being here. (Vasulka: Mm-hm) And you were in Europe quite a bit at that point, so that you were at Stein(?) and... (Vasulka: Yeah) I mean, I, you know, see this sort of, like, overview or larger kind of frame that it seems that you were able to pull from, because of these contacts.

VASULKA: Yeah, but Europe has its drawbacks. I would rather live here, because it's much easier being in video. Just access to technology, access to tools. I mean, here, it takes a call to an eight-hundred number, and whatever you need is on your doorstep, maybe the next morning. There is no such thing in Europe. I mean, if you call up somebody at an eight-hundred number and you say, "I need a time base corrector," they say, "We don't have it." And you say, "Where can I get it?" "I don't know." "Could you give us any other eight-hundred numbers?" "No." And... You know? It just...

MAN: I can't imagine.

VASULKA: If you come there as a guest, it is fabulous. (Man: Right) But if you are going to live there, you have to break through all these barriers, you know?

MAN: Mm-hm.

VASULKA: It's not the same collaborative idea. "Man, I've got a new time base corrector. It's cheap, and it's there, and I'll give you the number. And ask for Peter." You know? (inaudible; they laugh) "Tell him I sent you." No way.

MAN: Jessie, do you have some questions?

(inaudible voice)

MAN: How much time is left on the tape?

VASULKA: Yeah, for God's sake!

MAN: Yeah, it's a long tape.

(inaudible voice)

MAN: Twenty hours?

VOICE: (inaudible) hour and forty minutes.

MAN: Holy smoke! (inaudible)

VASULKA: We don't have to finish. There is sun outside.

MAN: You don't have to fill the whole tape.

MAN: Oh, man. We got two more tapes; I brought three. (they laugh)

MAN: You brought three, too?

MAN: Oh, you can do a twelve-hour interview.

MAN: Geez. Twelve hours. That's half a day.

WOMAN: Well, maybe what we could do is, when— in class this evening, maybe if there're some other questions that students might like to ask, we can probably show it(?) another time here and there, and add to it, because we did successfully complete '68 to '80, and (inaudible)

(inaudible voice)

MAN: See, that was just the first question.

WOMAN: I know.

MAN: There's eight more questions here.

WOMAN: I know.

MAN: And then there're three after that. This is... (they laugh; inaudible)

VASULKA: I've (inaudible) my heart, and this is all the thanks(?) (inaudible; they laugh)

WOMAN: Before we break...

MAN: Actually, look at the questions, right. See if you think there're any good ones there that... Pick your...

WOMAN: (inaudible) maybe you would help me out, since you have the mic, but it would be nice, I think, to repeat the date and all our people here. Here is...

RILEY: Blythe(?) Riley(sp?). (Woman: Ok) On April 1st, 1998.

MAN: Sound engineer.

BODE: Sound engineer. (Woman: Alright, and...) Video artist, extraordinaire.

WOMAN: And yourself.

BODE: And myself, Pere Bode. And...

WOMAN: You're with...

BODE: and I'm...

WOMAN: (inaudible)

BODE: I'm with Alfred. (they laugh; Woman: Inaudible) I'm with the Institute— one of the co-directors of the Institute for Electronic Arts.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

BODE: And then Steina Vasulka. And David Jones.

WOMAN: Of Dave Jones (inaudible)

BODE: Formerly Design Lab, and formerly Silver Bullet Video. And then Jessie Shefrin, co-director, Institute for Electronic Arts.

WOMAN: And I'm here doing the deep listening(?). (they laugh)

WOMAN: And...?

BODE: Andrew Deutsch.

WOMAN: Who's got a great glow on his face, which (inaudible; laughs)

MAN: Out in the sun, yeah.

WOMAN: (inaudible) And...

MAN: And the camera person...

WOMAN: If Andrew would help me out.

MAN: (inaudible) wanna do that.

WOMAN: (inaudible)

MAN: That's where we get the still snapshots.

WOMAN: (laughs; inaudible)

(inaudible voices)

VASULKA: Ah, we didn't do this right. We didn't do (inaudible, laughter) that we should(?), with literacy education.

MAN: (laughs) Well, that's the further... You know, this is (inaudible)

MAN: (inaudible)

MAN: You know. I think we sort of have you as...

(inaudible voice)

MAN: ...part of our (Man: Inaudible) honorary faculty of the Institute of Electronic Arts, and we'll be coming by occasionally, and we could pick this up at various points.

VASULKA: We can pick it up any time. (Man: Yeah) History doesn't go away. (Man: Inaudible) And tell me, how much are you getting paid for this?

WOMAN: How much? Oh, I don't know. Sherry takes good care of me.

VASULKA: Oh, yeah?

WOMAN: Thank you for asking. (laughs; inaudible)

MAN: Jessie, do you have a question? Did you go away to compose a question?

VASULKA: Now, we were supposed to concentrate on upstate, and we concentrated mostly on New York City, that pariah down there.

MAN: Did we? No, we did upstate.

VASULKA: Yeah, but now I understand (Man: inaudible) all these (inaudible) questions about Buffalo.

MAN: No, but that isn't— (laughter) I'm not... I wish I could be sneaky. (Woman: Inaudible; laughs) I'm not, I can't help it.

WOMAN: Not very good at being sneaky.

MAN: No. No, I thought, you know, that— well, we could (inaudible)

VASULKA: It's interesting that you didn't get anything out of Don, when we got so much out of Don, you know? It's interesting. 'Cause we just— then Walter came and did Dunbar(?) and Barbar(?), those programs.

MAN: Well, I remember that part of— that Walter was also working on all his software with the language, right? Some kind of real software project. But the hardware didn't exist yet in Binghamton, so he was sort of like writing the software; the hardware wasn't there, but the software was gonna be written and... It was sort of, you know, a funny timing thing that was going on.

VASULKA: Yeah. That was the big shocker when we realized we needed software. It is a big shock (inaudible)

MAN: And I wrote a program for the LSI-11 at the Center in '76 called Plop(?), which was a program to record movements on some of the knobs, so you could define a repeated(?) wave shape.

MAN: Yeah, (inaudible) class.

MAN: And we had a plotter (inaudible; Man: Yeah, we were gonna— were you gonna come in [inaudible]) that we borrowed from the university, (Woman: inaudible) so we could plot out (Man: Oh, great, ok) on the plotter the wave shapes, as a way of kind of (inaudible)

VASULKA: Ron(?) gave you(?) that, didn't he?

MAN: Ok, see you later.

MAN: It was used for a while at the Center, 'cause it had, I think, sixteen channels of voltage out on the box.

VASULKA: Yeah, yeah. Rhys(?) thinks that he gave us the LSI-11. I don't really remember it, but maybe he did.

MAN: Yeah, I'm pretty sure. I remember going out your way. A while ago.

VASULKA: Yeah. While we were still in Buffalo, huh?

MAN: No, it was— (Vasulka: No?) You were in Santa Fe.

VASULKA: Oh, I see.

MAN: It would've been in the eighties sometime. No, 'cause it stayed around for quite a while at the Center. But it hadn't been used for a while, and then it went out your way.

I'm pretty sure that would've been the eighties.

VASULKA: Oh, it was through Sherry(?) that we could collaborate, coordinate

(inaudible)

(inaudible voices; END)